

Gravatt, Dan

From: Whitley, Christopher
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 9:55 AM
To: Field, Jeff; Gravatt, Dan
Subject: Wall Street Journal Questions on West Lake
Attachments: West Lake WSJ Emshwiller Questions 12.02.13.docx

Importance: High

Jeff and Dan,

We've been tasked with putting together responses to about a dozen questions from the Wall Street Journal on West Lake. Actually, just for scorekeeping, there are more than 12 questions here, as several of the 12 on this list contain multiple questions therein. The good news is that some of them can simply be answered "No."

Would appreciate if the two of you could collaborate on a first draft of responses to these, then send to me, and I will include comments/edits and send them on up the chain to Ron, Cecilia and Hattie. We need to be able to respond to the reporter by tomorrow morning, if at all possible.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Karl and Mark may also want to see and weigh in on these responses before they go out, so yes, our time is tight.

Thanks,

Chris Whitley

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Superfund

1. Was the radioactive material illegally dumped at West Lake as some that I have interviewed have argued?
2. How did the EPA end up as the federal agency responsible for deciding what to do with the radioactive waste? Given that the waste appears to have been the result of work in the atomic-weapons program, why isn't it under the purview of the Department of Energy or the Army Corps of Engineers, through the FUSRAP program?
3. Some people have argued to me, pointing to past documents from the Atomic Energy Commission and other bodies, that the material taken from Latty Avenue and buried at West Lake was far more radioactive than the EPA has acknowledged. Specifically, they argue documents show the soil that mixed with the leached barium sulfate was highly contaminated, making the waste at West Lake more dangerous than initially believed. Does the EPA have any comment on this matter?
4. What, if any, comment does the EPA have about assertions from some outside observers that radioactive contamination several times background has shown up in groundwater samples at the perimeter of the site?
5. What, if any, comment does the EPA have about assertions that extremely high levels of thorium 230 and prospect that radium levels will rise significantly over the next several thousand years make the radioactive material too dangerous to leave in a landfill that is in a populated area and isn't designed or licensed to hold such radioactive waste?
6. Are workers being allowed to work at or near where the radioactive burial site locations at the landfill without protective clothing? If so, does the EPA have any concerns about such workers possibly being exposed to harmful levels of radiation? If not, why not?
7. What kinds of risks, if any, does the EPA believe could be posed to the public if the subsurface smoldering event—referred to by some as an underground fire---in the south part of the landfill area reaches the radioactive material in the north part of the landfill? Have any contingency or emergency plans been made for such a possibility? Some people I have talked with argue that the underground fire could cause radioactive material to become airborne and pose a threat to people in the area, possibly requiring people to be moved out of the area. Does the EPA have any comment on that claim?
8. Does the EPA believe that any radioactive material from the landfill is currently getting airborne?
9. I understand the EPA is currently reviewing its 2008 decision that called for leaving the radioactive waste in the ground along with making certain protective improvements at the site. When does the EPA expect that review to be completed and made public? Can the EPA give me any idea what the review has determined so far?
10. Was pressure brought to bear on members of the Remedy Review Board by either EPA regional officials or those at headquarters to modify its recommendations regarding West Lake in order to bring any such recommendations more in line with the decisions in the 2008 ROD?
11. Some critics in the local community contend that the EPA hasn't done enough to protect the public from the dangers posed by the radioactive waste at West Lake. One such critic asserts that actions by officials resemble an "amateur hour." Does the EPA have any comment about

criticism that it hasn't done an adequate job handling the issue of radioactive waste at West Lake and protecting the public?

12. Does the EPA believe that the radioactive waste at West Lake has harmed any members of the public? Does the agency believe that waste poses a threat to the public?